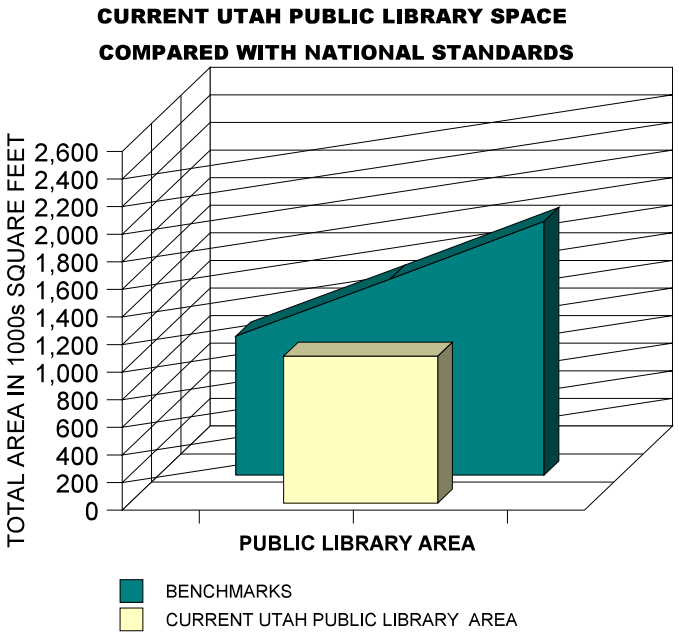
LIBRARY STANDARDS

Existing library space standards, developed in the 1970s and 1980s, have not been updated to reflect the explosion in electronic and media services. Anders Dahlgren notes that "automation has changed library service patterns, and the old standards do not reflect the new applications." He explains that "as these existing standards have grown increasingly outdated, there has been a shift in the library community away from . . . the type of measure that has typified library building standards in the past" toward a planning process that takes into account the individual service missions and needs of each library.[32]

The greatest drawback to the old standards, as Gerard McCabe points out, was the fact that "too strict an adherence to space formulas [resulted] in a cramped building and hampered flexibility."[33] Raymond Holt summarizes, "Based on averages and limited understanding of the scope of contemporary library operations, these formulas do not consider most of the local factors which have a heavy impact upon. . . public libraries." He concludes that "because they fail to recognize the individual differences among libraries and the community of users that each serves, these equations have contributed a good deal to the space shortages in many libraries today."[34]

For the purposes of this study, however, existing standards are a tool that can help to place Utah's public library needs in a broader context.

To determine which standards would be used to extrapolate space needs in this study, the study team reviewed materials developed by the American Library Association, the Public Library Association, the Connecticut State Library, the State Library of Iowa, the Ontario Public Library, and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, as well as standard architectural and planning references and recent programs and facilities studies developed for the Salt



Lake City Public Library, the Salt Lake County Library System, and recently completed Utah libraries.

Drawing on these sources, the study team ran calculations for each library to establish current and future sizes based on an overall per capita space allocation, a growth factor times current size, and a series of square footage assignments for the numbers of seats, computers, meeting room spaces, and other functions identified by librarians. This provided a range of numbers that establish a benchmark against which Utah library data can be compared.

CURRENT CONDITIONS COMPARED TO BENCHMARKS

Square Footage

The outcome of the comparison is clear: by any means used to calculate the space needed for library functions, Utah's public libraries on average currently fall below the lowest benchmark level. Only a handful of libraries exceeded benchmark levels, and those tended to be unusual cases –

libraries like Minersville, with an extremely small service population, or Park City, with an unusually high revenue base.

Allocation of Space and Resources

The allocation of space for library functions reflects what librarians reported anecdotally and what was apparent in walk-throughs: Utah's library resources are overwhelmingly concentrated in spaces used by patrons. Faced with critical space shortages, librarians have sacrificed their work, storage, and support spaces to house collections, provide seating, and install computer stations for patron use. With limited budgets, funds for facilities repair and maintenance have been devoted to making public areas as pleasant and comfortable as possible. Overall, the 4.9% of space allocated for staff and administrative work and support space in Utah's libraries falls well below norms. Storage, at 3.9%, is less than half the recommended 10% allocation.

Efficiency

Planners use a measure called "efficiency" to refer to the ratio of assignable building space to total space. Functions that have direct public or staff use – like stacks, seating, and work stations – are considered assignable space. But any facility contains other spaces – lobbies, stairs and elevators, restrooms, furnace or mechanical rooms, custodial closets, and the like – that are essential to the function of the building but not allocated to individual users. A well-designed new library will typically have an efficiency ratio in the range of 70-76%.

This can be a confusing concept for non-architects. It appears that many librarians reported every square inch they used as "assignable" space – though that space often occurred in areas such as furnace rooms and corridors. In some cases, support space was not listed because the library shares space in a public facility and librarians have no direct control over, or information about, restrooms, building storage, or mechanical and electrical space. Thus the average efficiency shown by raw survey data – 73% – appears not to represent actual conditions. Visual evidence indicates that actual efficiency is typically lower, and data from libraries that had detailed and apparently precise space information show that in some cases it is much lower, as low as 25-30%.

Clearly many of Utah's older public library buildings pay a premium for space that they cannot use effectively for library functions. In some cases, a series of small renovations has created usable – but inefficiently configured – space. In other cases libraries have adapted facilities originally designed for other uses, making the best of dimensions and spatial arrangements that are not optimal for library